



Integrated quality and enhancement review

Summative review

North East Worcestershire College

May 2012

SR 071/12

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2012

ISBN 978 1 84979 665 1

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges. This process is known as Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER).

Purpose of IQER

Higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges (colleges) lead to awards made by higher education institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The purpose of IQER is, therefore, to safeguard the public interest in the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered in colleges. It achieves this by providing objective and independent information about the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their partnership agreements with awarding bodies. IQER focuses on three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

The IQER process

IQER is a peer review process. It is divided into two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. In accordance with the published method, colleges with less than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may elect not to take part in Developmental engagements, but all HEFCE-funded colleges will take part in Summative review.

Developmental engagement

Developmental engagements explore in an open and collegial way the challenges colleges face in specific areas of higher education provision. Each college's first, and often their only, Developmental engagement focuses on student assessment.

The main elements of a Developmental engagement are:

- a self-evaluation by the college
- an optional written submission by the student body
- a preparatory meeting between the college and the IQER coordinator several weeks before the Developmental engagement visit
- the Developmental engagement visit, which normally lasts two days
- the evaluation of the extent to which the college manages effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision, plus the arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information it is responsible for publishing about its higher education
- the production of a written report of the team's findings.

To promote a collegial approach, Developmental engagement teams include up to two members of staff from the further education college under review. They are known as nominees for this process.

Summative review

Summative review addresses all aspects of a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision and provides judgements on the management and delivery of this provision against core themes one and two, and a conclusion against core theme three.

Summative review shares the main elements of Developmental engagement described above. Summative review teams however, are composed of the IQER coordinator and QAA reviewers. They do not include nominees.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, IQER teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the college's self-evaluation and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

IQER teams' expectations of colleges are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) which includes descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*)
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study
- award benchmark statements which describe the generic characteristics of an award, for example Foundation Degrees.

In addition, Developmental engagement teams gather evidence by focusing on particular aspects of the theme under review. These are known as 'lines of enquiry'.

Outcomes of IQER

Each Developmental engagement and Summative review results in a written report:

- Developmental engagement reports set out good practice and recommendations and implications for the college and its awarding bodies, but do not contain judgements. Recommendations will be at one of three levels - **essential**, **advisable** and **desirable**. To promote an open and collegial approach to Developmental engagements, the reports are not published.
- Summative review reports identify good practice and contain judgements about whether the college is discharging its responsibilities effectively against core themes one and two above. The judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**. There is no judgement for the third core theme, instead the report will provide evaluation and a conclusion. Summative review reports are published. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team judges a college's

management of the standards and/or quality of the awards made by one awarding body to be different from those made by another.

Colleges are required to develop an action plan to address any recommendations arising from IQER. Progress against these action plans is monitored by QAA in conjunction with HEFCE and/or the college's awarding bodies as appropriate. The college's action plan in response to the conclusions of the Summative review will be published as part of the report.

Executive summary

The Summative review of North East Worcestershire College carried out in May 2012

As a result of its investigations, the Summative review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers. The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice** for dissemination:

- a distinctive new higher education presence has been established within the local community and a curriculum-focused resourcing model sustains the high quality facilities.

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it would be **advisable** for the College to:

- strengthen the operation of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Board to ensure that it fully meets its stated remit and better supports the management of academic standards and quality
- review the mechanism for self-assessment reporting at programme and College levels to provide a more rigorous evaluation of the processes that underpin academic standards and quality
- introduce a formal internal process for the systematic annual review of all course handbooks.

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the College to:

- establish a mechanism for ensuring that the collective opinions of higher education students are considered more explicitly at College level
- develop and implement existing plans for a programme of peer-based teaching observations specifically for higher education.

A Introduction and context

1 This report presents the findings of the Summative review of higher education funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) conducted at North East Worcestershire College (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College discharges its responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes which the College delivers on behalf of Edexcel, the University of Gloucestershire, the University of Warwick, the University of Wolverhampton and the University of Worcester. The review was carried out by Ms Jane Davis, Dr Sarah Shobbrook, Mr John Skinner (reviewers), and Mr David Lewis (Coordinator).

2 The Summative review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review* (the handbook) published by QAA. Evidence in support of the Summative review included documentation supplied by the College and its awarding bodies, meetings with staff, students and the main partner institution, and reports of reviews by QAA and from inspections by Ofsted. In particular, the team drew on the findings and recommendations of the Developmental engagement in assessment. A summary of findings from the Developmental engagement is provided in Section C of this report. The review also considered the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of higher education providers, with reference to the *Code of practice*, subject and award benchmark statements, the FHEQ and programme specifications.

3 In order to help HEFCE to gain information to assist with the assessment of the impact of Foundation Degree awards, Section D of this report summarises details of the Foundation Degree programmes delivered at the College.

4 North East Worcestershire College is a medium-sized general college of further education, based on large campuses at Bromsgrove and Redditch. Its mission emphasises the provision of high quality and flexible learning opportunities to promote individual independence, the development of skills for employment, and the economic prosperity of the community. A set of explicit objectives for higher education reflects the mission statement. The College enjoys Beacon status and offers a diverse spread of subjects, delivered from entry level through to higher education. The most recent Ofsted report, in 2010, judged the College to be good, with some outstanding aspects. A focused monitoring visit in September 2011 concluded that reasonable or significant progress had been made in six of the seven inspection themes. Insufficient progress had been made in 'improving learners' outcomes' since the 2010 inspection.

5 The College has around 6,500 students, including nearly 400 (around 6 per cent) studying on higher education programmes. Just over 60 per cent of higher education students are full-time. The higher education provision is funded directly by HEFCE and is delivered at Bromsgrove and Redditch. The provision is organised within four curriculum departments, supported by a Department of Quality and Professional Development. Academic management operates across further and higher education provision within the College, but with some separate quality assurance procedures specifically designed for higher education programmes. Most higher education staff also teach on further education programmes.

6 The higher education awards delivered by the College and funded by HEFCE are listed below, under the awarding body and with the number of students in brackets:

Edexcel

- HND Performing Arts (7 part-time)
- HND Sport and Exercise Science (17)
- HND Sport (Coaching and Sports Development) (14)
- HNC Interactive Media (7 part-time)
- HNC Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (4 part-time)
- HND Business Management (21 part-time)

University of Gloucestershire

- FdA Art and Design in the Creative Industries - Fine Art (19)
- FdA Art and Design in the Creative Industries - Fashion and Textile Design (9)
- FdA Art and Design in the Creative Industries - Graphic Design (14)
- FdA Art and Design in the Creative Industries - Three Dimensional Design (2)
- FdA Media Production (Moving Image) (29)
- FdA Creative Music Production (5)
- FdA Performing Arts in the Community (9 part-time)

University of Warwick

- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (31 part-time)
- Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (10 part-time)

University of Wolverhampton

- FdSc Interactive Media and Games Development (40)

University of Worcester

- FdA Early Years Sector Endorsed (58 part-time)
- BA (Hons) Social Work (95)
- FdA Leadership and Management (5)

Partnership agreements with the awarding bodies

7 The higher education programmes are directly funded and delivered by the College in association with five awarding bodies. The College has well-established arrangements with the University of Warwick, the University of Worcester and Edexcel. Awards of the Universities of Gloucestershire and Wolverhampton have been approved over the past three years, extending the provision of Foundation Degrees in the arts and media.

8 The College's responsibilities for the management of academic standards and quality vary in detail between the different awarding bodies. In the case of the University of Gloucestershire, nearly all responsibilities are devolved to the College, while with the University of Worcester the large majority of these responsibilities are shared. The College

has sole or shared responsibility for the setting and marking of assessments, except for the University of Warwick, which retains that responsibility. Across all agreements, it assumes total responsibility for employer liaison and involvement and has substantial responsibilities in respect of curriculum development, monitoring and review, teaching and learning, student support, staff development, and public information.

Recent developments in higher education at the College

9 The number of higher education students at the College has largely been sustained, though with a slight contraction, since the Developmental engagement in 2010. The cap on first-year recruitment has been a challenge for the College, while the number of recruits to teacher education programmes has declined. Despite this, applications have remained buoyant across the provision and the College has been allocated 18 additional HEFCE places for 2012-13. The College anticipates further growth in arts and media and the development of Higher National awards in health and social care. Major capital projects have resulted in the substantial redevelopment of both campuses, each providing enhanced modern facilities for higher education. Arts and media provision has benefited from the investment at Bromsgrove, while a modern, dedicated higher education centre, Osprey House, has been commissioned at Redditch. The latter achieves the long-standing College aim of giving the town a higher education campus.

Students' contribution to the review, including the written submission

10 Students on the higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The process was overseen by the College's Head of Quality and Professional Development and resulted in a submission being provided alongside the self-evaluation. Student views were collected through a written questionnaire, followed by a focus group in which the results of the questionnaires were discussed with student representatives. The outcomes of the discussion were then shared with students and agreed prior to submission. The student submission proved useful in informing the topics that were explored during the review, some of which were followed up in a highly informative meeting with students during the visit.

B Evaluation of the management of HEFCE-funded higher education

Core theme 1: Academic standards

How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

11 The College has a clear academic management structure, which operates across its further and higher education provision. There are separate quality processes for higher education to reflect the partnership agreements with awarding bodies. The Vice Principal Quality, Higher Education and Standards has strategic responsibility for higher education, reporting to the Principal, Executive Team and the College Corporation. The Vice Principal also line-manages the Head of Quality and Professional Development, whose role includes that of higher education coordinator. The Vice Principal Curriculum, Development, Skills and Innovation oversees the delivery of all further and higher education programmes. The

responsibilities include staffing, resources and the management of Heads of Department and Programme Area Managers.

12 Well-defined arrangements are in place for the monitoring and reporting of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Significant responsibilities rest at programme and curriculum levels, through programme leaders, programme committees and programme area managers. Regular and constructive interaction with the awarding universities, including link tutors, helps to ensure that the differing requirements of each awarding body are well understood and effectively managed. A working group has been established to develop a more consistent understanding and implementation of academic standards across the Higher National programmes.

13 The committee structure provides for programme committees to report to the Higher Education Quality Assurance Board, which is the senior committee specifically for higher education matters. The membership and terms of reference confirm its importance in maintaining an overview of the provision. The board meets three times each year and its remit covers a range of matters critical to the safeguarding of academic standards across the College. These include adherence to agreed policies, use of the Academic Infrastructure, annual self-assessment, external examiner reports and the outcomes of student surveys and staff-student liaison committees. On the evidence of board minutes since the Developmental engagement, the key functions of the board are not being fully met, nor do the records of meetings allow for the effective auditing of its discussions and actions. Some programmes have failed to submit annual monitoring self-assessments to the board. It is therefore advisable that the operation of the board is strengthened to ensure that it fully meets its stated remit and better supports the management of academic standards and quality.

What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure?

14 Overall, the provision is being managed in accordance with the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure, as claimed in the self-evaluation. In the case of new programmes, proposals are required to follow a clearly articulated set of College procedures, which take account of the relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements, as well as the views of employers. Developments must be compatible with the College's mission and strategic plan, while the awarding body approval procedures further help to ensure that the processes reflect the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*.

15 The Developmental engagement confirmed that, overall, College assessment procedures take appropriate account of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Since the Developmental engagement visit, the College has actively sought to engage staff more explicitly with the Academic Infrastructure, but recognises that there are still inconsistencies between curriculum teams, for example in respect of the FHEQ. The College undertakes assessment and internal verification in line with its Quality Assurance Framework, which includes a specific higher education assessment and internal verification policy. The framework is designed to support the maintenance of academic standards and engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, and is being used more widely than at the time of the Developmental engagement. Staff acknowledge the general support that is readily available from University colleagues, including link tutors, on using the Academic Infrastructure as part of programme delivery.

How does the College assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of awarding bodies?

16 The College has a range of mechanisms, including self-assessment reporting, for ensuring that academic standards meet the differing requirements of its awarding bodies. The close working relationships between programme teams and their awarding bodies ensure that requirements are well understood and that any issues can be promptly addressed. This is particularly evident in the long-established partnerships with the University of Warwick and the University of Worcester. Awarding body representatives offered the team assurance that the College is meeting its delegated responsibilities in respect of standards, quality and public information.

17 The Higher Education Assessment Panel has an explicit remit in relation to standards, which includes the receipt of recommended grades for partner University examination boards, the rigour and consistency of assessment decisions across Higher National programmes, and reports from the Mitigating Circumstances Committee. The responsibility for ensuring effective student assessment and verification lies with each Programme Leader, supported by the relevant Programme Area Manager. Since the Developmental engagement, the College has strengthened the internal verification process to provide clear schedules and more consistency in the process and outcomes.

18 The College has satisfactory procedures for the consideration of external examiner reports. The Head of Quality and Professional Development receives reports from the awarding universities, either directly or through the programme team, depending on local arrangements. They are processed using a front sheet, on which issues and areas of good practice are highlighted, initially for acceptance by the Executive Team and then for action by the relevant Head of Department and programme team. Subsequent actions are monitored through the self-assessment and partnership annual monitoring processes.

19 The College self-assessment and partnership annual monitoring processes offer a mechanism through which the Executive Team can evaluate the effectiveness of its provision. All programme teams complete a self-assessment, although the format is variable, resulting in some Higher National reports being focused on data and lacking evaluation. The annual monitoring reports produced for awarding universities indicate a more critical approach. The programme self-assessments are used to produce a college-wide self-assessment report. The effectiveness of this potentially valuable quality assurance tool is constrained by its lack of critical evaluation and limited coverage. The reporting of academic standards in the 2010-11 report is limited to the findings of the Developmental engagement and does not sufficiently evaluate the effectiveness of management processes or the committee structures. It is advisable that the mechanism for self-assessment reporting at programme and College levels is reviewed to provide a more rigorous and consistent evaluation of the higher education provision.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to support the achievement of appropriate academic standards?

20 The Head of Quality and Professional Development is responsible for coordinating and planning staff development within agreed resourcing levels, which are being well maintained by the College. New staff receive a carefully designed College induction and are supported by their line manager and a designated mentor. This helps to ensure that they are aware of relevant academic standards, including the requirements of assessing on higher education programmes. Staff have benefited, over the past two years, from a range of higher education development activities that support academic standards. These have included

sessions relating to the Academic Infrastructure and assessment, some organised by awarding bodies.

21 Staff have also been supported in maintaining and developing their subject knowledge and skills, including scholarly activity and study for higher degrees. Many staff maintain subject currency through continuing professional practice, as is evident in the public exhibitions of art staff.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities

How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?

22 The general responsibilities and management arrangements for the quality of learning opportunities are clear and as described in paragraphs 11 to 13. The Head of Quality and Professional Development has substantial responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities, including coordination of the Quality Improvement Team, and reports to the Vice Principal Quality, Higher Education and Standards. There is also an Assistant Principal for Learner Experience whose responsibilities include student services and information and learning technology. The different requirements of each awarding body are effectively managed by devolving many quality responsibilities to the curriculum areas, where programme leaders and programme area managers play key roles, reporting to heads of department. The College has introduced its own mitigating circumstances policy to ensure it meets its obligations to Edexcel and the University of Gloucestershire.

How does the College assure itself that that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding bodies to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities?

23 The College has well-defined quality assurance and reporting mechanisms, as described in paragraphs 16 and 19. These include annual self-assessment reporting at curriculum and College levels. There is also regular dialogue with awarding universities at curriculum and senior management levels, with representation on a number of each other's key committees. This interaction helps to ensure that obligations and expectations are well understood.

24 College quality assurance arrangements include well-established systems for collecting student opinion, supported by a published learner involvement strategy and associated learner voice calendar. The methods for collecting student views include module evaluations, course representatives, student liaison meetings and questionnaires. There is also an annual themed Learner Conference for student representatives, but this does not differentiate between higher and further education provision. Students expressed the view that current arrangements do not provide for a coherent higher education voice. The different requirements of awarding bodies also leads to significant variation in the way that student opinion is considered within programme self-assessment reports. It is unclear, from the records, how the Higher Education Quality Assurance Board is able to take an overview of the opinions of students from across the College. It is desirable that the College provides

a mechanism for ensuring that the collective opinions of higher education students are considered more explicitly at the overall College level.

How does the College assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

25 The Quality Improvement Team has a central role in assuring the quality of teaching and learning. It is led by the Head of Quality and Professional Development and comprises trained, experienced quality reviewers, including some with significant involvement in higher education. The team undertakes a systematic programme of teaching observations, as well as other activities such as departmental and themed quality reviews, in line with the College quality strategy and quality assurance handbook. The teaching observations are undertaken systematically, using the standard College method that has been developed to meet the needs and expectations of further education. It is desirable that the College builds on existing ideas to develop a programme of peer-based teaching observations specifically for higher education. Student feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction with teaching, a view that was confirmed by students in discussions with the team and in external examiner reports.

26 The College recognises the importance of assessment feedback in supporting student learning and has introduced improvements in response to a recommendation from the Developmental engagement. For example, a new template now allows students to comment on the usefulness of the feedback they receive, in line with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. A scrutiny of assessed student work confirms that written feedback has improved and is generally helpful, as noted in some external examiner reports. It also shows that there are still some variations in the focus and usefulness of feedback comments.

How does the College assure itself that students are supported effectively?

27 The College has either sole or a shared responsibility for student support in all of its partnership agreements. In meeting these responsibilities, it provides a wide range of academic and pastoral support services, which are highly regarded by students. These include a central advice and guidance service that offers some specific higher education support on matters such as applications, accommodation and finance. Academic support is provided through programme-level tutorials, as well as central higher education learning advisers and a newly appointed learning support lecturer. The latter is intended to offer a focus for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as support for employment and further study. There are clear policies and arrangements in place for those programmes that include work-based learning or placements. These take full account of the requirements of awarding bodies and reflect the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*.

28 Teaching teams work closely with their awarding universities to provide a thorough induction that informs students about both partner institutions. It covers the requirements of the programme, College life and facilities, as well as the range of services and support that is available.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

29 There are clear arrangements for identifying staff development needs and priorities, which operate within the context of a published College professional development policy. Needs are identified at curriculum level through the self-assessment and appraisal processes. The Head of Quality and Professional Development is responsible for considering proposals in the context of College priorities. In addition to general college-wide development activities, an annual Higher Education Conference has been held for the past two years. Conference topics have included the requirements and action planning for IQER, the Academic Infrastructure and national policy and sector updates. Staff have benefited from a range of College development activities relating to teaching and learning. The Quality Improvement Team contributes to the sharing of good practice by posting practices emerging from teaching observations to the staff intranet.

How does the College ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?

30 The College has appropriately qualified and experienced staff teaching its higher education programmes, and students confirm that they have good access to them. Suitable technical support is available in practical and production areas of the curriculum. Students are particularly appreciative of the work of Learning Resource Centre staff in supporting their studies.

31 Recent major improvements to the physical environment have contributed significantly to the quality of higher education learning. Strategic developments have resulted in high quality accommodation on both campuses, as well as professional quality specialist arts facilities at Bromsgrove that have been praised by external examiners. The Osprey House development provides a distinctive higher education presence in the community that fulfils a long-standing strategic objective. The College has a clear annual business planning process for addressing continuing resource needs. Following consideration of the outcomes of programme self-assessment and departmental requests, business support managers consider the resultant curriculum needs before submitting their own requirements. It is good practice that the College has implemented its higher education strategy to provide a distinctive higher education environment on both campuses and has a curriculum-focused resourcing model that sustains the high quality facilities.

The team concludes that it has confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities as required by the awarding bodies to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Core theme 3: Public information

What information is the College responsible for publishing about its HEFCE-funded higher education?

32 The College publishes an appropriate range of electronic and printed information for potential and current students, employers and staff. This includes a higher education prospectus, publicity materials, programme specifications, course and module handbooks and general policy, and strategic and operational directives for staff and other stakeholders. For programmes with work placement, information booklets are produced to support

workplace supervisors and practice educators. The delegated responsibilities of the College for public information are clearly prescribed within the partnership agreement for each awarding body and are well understood. The College has full responsibility for the information that it publishes about its Edexcel programmes.

33 The College website is the key source of public information and its content is used as the basis for printed materials, for example the higher education prospectus. The website has a clearly signposted higher education area that is visually engaging and easy to navigate. Website pages relating to higher education follow a standard format, allowing programme summaries and full programme specifications to be easily downloaded. The website also provides links to general College information that is relevant to higher education students. This includes helpful guidance on how to apply, student support, careers and finance. Key documents such as programme specifications, course handbooks and module handbooks are also available in print. The College intranet provides staff with access to a range of policies, procedures and operational directives.

**What arrangements does the College have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the College has responsibility for publishing?
How does the College know that these arrangements are effective?**

34 The College has effective procedures for ensuring the quality, accuracy and completeness of the public information for which it is responsible. The Vice Principal Quality, Higher Education and Standards retains the ultimate responsibility for signing off information, which is initially produced and checked at curriculum level. There are clear mechanisms in place for ensuring that information meets the differing requirements of awarding bodies. For Edexcel programmes, teaching staff liaise directly with the College marketing team to develop materials in line with in-house formats. For other awarding bodies, where the College has shared responsibilities, relevant staff, normally Programme Area Managers, work closely with the appropriate University staff to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information. For the University of Warwick and the University of Wolverhampton, the College marketing team deals directly with the relevant University departments. All awarding bodies, except for Edexcel, retain responsibility for the final approval of published information relating to their named awards. Staff understand the public information protocols and the importance of operating within them.

35 The Head of Information and Learning Technology and Learning Resources has a key role in ensuring the accuracy and currency of information published on the intranet and virtual learning environment. This role involves the regular audit of content, as well as the collection and analysis of usage data. It also includes promoting the wider use of the virtual learning environment for learning and teaching, which is currently variable between curriculum areas.

36 The Developmental engagement recommended that arrangements for checking and approving course handbooks be strengthened to address inconsistencies in the quality of those produced for Higher National programmes. The handbooks have clearly improved, helped by a series of initiatives, including the sharing of good practice and the work of a specially formed task group. However, there is no formal handbook for the HNC Interactive Media, which indicates the need for further improvement to the checking procedures. It is advisable that the College introduce a more effective formal internal process for the systematic annual review of all course handbooks.

37 The students met during the review confirmed that the information they receive prior to enrolment is complete, accurate and a fair reflection of their experience at the College.

They also observed that the information needed during their studies is accurate, relevant and accessible.

The team considers that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

C Summary of findings from the Developmental engagement in assessment

38 The Developmental engagement in assessment was undertaken in May 2011. It focused on three lines of enquiry, which were agreed with the College in advance. The lines of enquiry reflect a broad range of assessment issues and allowed the team to explore the three IQER core themes. The lines of enquiry were as follows.

Line of enquiry 1: How effective are the College's assessment arrangements, particularly its internal verification systems, in maintaining academic standards?

Line of enquiry 2: Does assessment feedback to students promote effective learning?

Line of enquiry 3: Do course handbooks and other published information provide students with accurate and sufficient assessment information?

39 The Developmental engagement report identifies a range of good practice across all three core themes. These include the role of cross-college quality reviewers and the virtual learning environment, notably its use to provide assessment feedback on media and music programmes. The report also highlights the higher education area of the College website and the comprehensive handbook for BA (Hons) Social Work, which students use extensively.

40 The report contains a number of recommendations for improving the standards and quality of higher education. It refers to the advisability of reviewing the internal verification process, the need to address inconsistencies in the assessment feedback given to students and the need for a more rigorous system for monitoring assessment practice within the College. The report outlines two desirable recommendations for enhancing the provision. The College should encourage staff to engage more explicitly with the Academic Infrastructure and strengthen the arrangements for checking the accuracy and consistency of the course handbooks for Higher National awards.

D Foundation Degrees

41 The College currently has 10 Foundation Degree programmes, offered in association with three awarding bodies. Its first award, in social care, was introduced in 2001-02 and has now been developed as a full-time University of Worcester honours degree, delivered by the College. The College continued to develop its Foundation Degrees with the University of Worcester up until 2009-10 and that provision now comprises awards in early years and leadership and management. The provision has been expanded in the past two years through partnerships with two other universities. The University of Wolverhampton validated an award in interactive media and games development for 2009-10. A further suite of seven programmes in the arts, design and media has been introduced since 2010-11 as awards of the University of Gloucestershire. The College has

recently decided to retain and add to some of its Higher National awards, rather than develop them as additional Foundation Degrees.

42 Foundation Degrees comprise a substantial part of the College's higher education provision. The evaluations within the text are the same for Foundation Degrees as for the provision generally, except where they make explicit reference to other programmes. The overall conclusions listed in paragraphs 43 to 47 apply to all provision, including the Foundation Degrees.

E Conclusions and summary of judgements

43 The team has identified a number of features of good practice in the College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and for the quality of learning opportunities of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies. This was based upon discussion with staff and students and scrutiny of evidence provided by the College and its awarding bodies, Edexcel, the University of Gloucestershire, the University of Warwickshire, the University of Wolverhampton and the University of Worcester.

44 In the course of the review, the team identified the following areas of **good practice**:

- a distinctive new higher education presence has been established within the local community and a curriculum-focused resourcing model sustains the high quality facilities (paragraph 31).

45 The team also makes some recommendations for consideration by the College and its awarding bodies.

46 The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- strengthen the operation of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Board to ensure that it fully meets its stated remit and better supports the management of academic standards and quality (paragraph 13)
- review the mechanism for self-assessment reporting at programme and College levels to provide a more rigorous evaluation of the processes that underpin academic standards and quality (paragraph 19)
- introduce a formal internal process for the systematic annual review of all course handbooks (paragraph 36).

47 The team considers that it is **desirable** for the College to:

- establish a mechanism for ensuring that the collective opinions of higher education students are considered more explicitly at college level (paragraph 24)
- develop and implement existing plans for a programme of peer-based teaching observations specifically for higher education (paragraph 25).

48 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has **confidence** that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreements for the management of the standards of the awards of its awarding bodies.

49 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that it has

confidence that, in the context of this Summative review, the College discharges its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the relevant partnership agreements for the management of the quality of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

50 Based upon its analysis of the College's self-evaluation, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the team concludes that, in the context of this Summative review, reliance **can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

North East Worcestershire College action plan relating to the Summative review May 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
In the course of the Summative review the team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a distinctive new higher education presence has been established within the local community and a curriculum-focused resourcing model sustains the high quality facilities (paragraph 31) 	Ensure these distinctive strengths are fully stated and clearly visible on the higher education section of the College's website	November 2012	Assistant Principal Learner Engagement	Increased reference to the College's higher education accommodation and resources on the higher education section of the College's website	Executive Team	Executive Team to maintain overview
	Maintain and where possible improve the accommodation and resources for higher education students	July 2013	Vice Principal Curriculum Development Skills and Innovation	Accommodation and resources for higher education students maintained or improved	Executive Team	Executive Team to maintain overview

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthen the operation of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Board to ensure that it fully meets its stated remit and better supports the management of academic standards and quality (paragraph 13) 	Remit to be reviewed and revisions made to reflect Summative review discussions	June 2012	Vice Principal Quality Higher Education and Standards	Remit reviewed and revised	Higher Education Quality Assurance Board	Executive Team to review via Higher Education Quality Assurance Board minutes and outcomes
	New remit to be communicated to board members and implemented	June 2012	Vice Principal Quality Higher Education and Standards	New remit communicated and implemented	Higher Education Quality Assurance Board	Executive Team to review via Higher Education Quality Assurance Board minutes and outcomes
	Termly reporting of the activities of the Quality Assurance Board to the Executive Team to enable monitoring of implementation and intervention where necessary	September 2012	Vice Principal Quality Higher Education and Standards	Termly reports received by the Executive Team	Executive Team	Executive Team to review termly reports and confirm remit of Higher Education Quality Assurance Board is appropriate and is being delivered
		January 2013 July 2013				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the mechanism for self-assessment reporting at programme and College levels to 	Programme self-assessment requirements to be confirmed	September 2013	Vice Principal Quality Higher Education and Standards	Self-assessment requirements produced and disseminated	Executive Team	Executive Team to confirm the mechanism for self-assessment is appropriate

provide a more rigorous evaluation of the processes that underpin academic standards and quality (paragraph 19)	<p>Programme self-assessment reports to be completed by Course Leaders; checked by Assistant Faculty Directors, Faculty Directors and Vice Principal Curriculum Development Skills and Innovation; and reviewed by the Higher Education Quality Assurance Board</p>	October 2013	Course Leaders, Assistant Faculty Directors, Faculty Directors and Vice Principal Curriculum Development Skills and Innovation	Programme self-assessment reports meet College requirements	Vice Principal Quality Higher Education and Standards	Executive Team to receive progress report on programme self-assessment reports
	<p>College higher education self-assessment report to be produced and reviewed by Higher Education Quality Assurance Board</p>	December 2013	Vice Principal Quality Higher Education and Standards	<p>Programme self-assessment reports reviewed at Higher Education Quality Assurance Board</p> <p>College higher education self-assessment report in place and reviewed by Higher Education Quality Assurance Board</p>	Higher Education Quality Assurance Board	Executive Team to receive final higher education self-assessment report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce a formal internal process for the systematic 	Review pro-forma to be produced that sets out requirements and supports checking	October 2013	Vice Principal Quality Higher Education and Standards	Pro-forma produced and disseminated	Higher Education Quality Assurance Board	Executive Team to receive updates and monitor progress

annual review of all course handbooks (paragraph 36)	Pro-forma to be completed by Course Leaders, Assistant Faculty Directors, Faculty Directors and Vice Principal Curriculum Development Skills and Innovation	January 2013	Course Leaders, Assistant Faculty Directors, Faculty Directors and Vice Principal Curriculum Development Skills and Innovation	Course handbooks meet specification and college requirements		
	Higher Education Administrator to collate all pro-forma and outcome reported to Higher Education Quality Assurance Board	March 2013	Higher Education Administrator	Pro-forma completed, all pro-forma collected and outcome reported to Higher Education Quality Assurance Board		
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a mechanism for ensuring that the collective opinions of higher education students are considered more explicitly at 	Current approach to collecting and responding to higher education students' views to be reviewed and strengthened, with a stronger focus on disseminating outcomes to students	September 2012	Assistant Principal Learner Engagement	New processes implemented. Clear reporting back to students regarding actions taken	Higher Education Quality Assurance Board	Executive Team to receive updates and monitor progress

college level (paragraph 24)	Outcomes from student views and college responses to be reviewed termly	January 2013 May 2013 July 2013	Assistant Principal Learner Engagement	Termly summary produced of students' responses and actions	Higher Education Quality Assurance Board	Executive Team to receive updates and monitor progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a mechanism for ensuring that the collective opinions of higher education students are considered more explicitly at college level (paragraph 24) 	Current approach to collecting and responding to higher education students' views to be reviewed and strengthened, with a stronger focus on disseminating outcomes to students	September 2012	Assistant Principal Learner Engagement	New processes implemented. Clear reporting back to students regarding actions taken	Higher Education Quality Assurance Board	Executive Team to receive updates and monitor progress
	Outcomes from student views and college responses to be reviewed termly	January 2013 May 2013 July 2013	Assistant Principal Learner Engagement	Termly summary produced of students' responses and actions	Higher Education Quality Assurance Board	Executive Team to receive updates and monitor progress
	Wider discussion on this topic to be held with higher education staff at the Annual Higher Education Staff Conference to capture all views and ideas; outcomes of the discussion collated and presented to the Executive Team	October 2012	Vice Principal Quality Higher Education and Standards	Discussion undertaken	Executive Team	Executive Team to confirm outline of peer-based observation scheme for higher education

	Details of pilot peer-based teaching observation scheme confirmed	December 2012	Vice Principal Curriculum Development Skills and Innovation	Outcomes collated and reviewed by the Executive Team	Executive Team	Executive Team to receive updates and monitor progress
	Pilot reviewed and follow-up actions identified	April 2013	Vice Principal Curriculum Development Skills and Innovation	Pilot peer-based teaching observation scheme implemented; evaluation completed, actions identified	Executive Team	Executive Team to receive review and approve follow up actions

RG 1008 08/12

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk